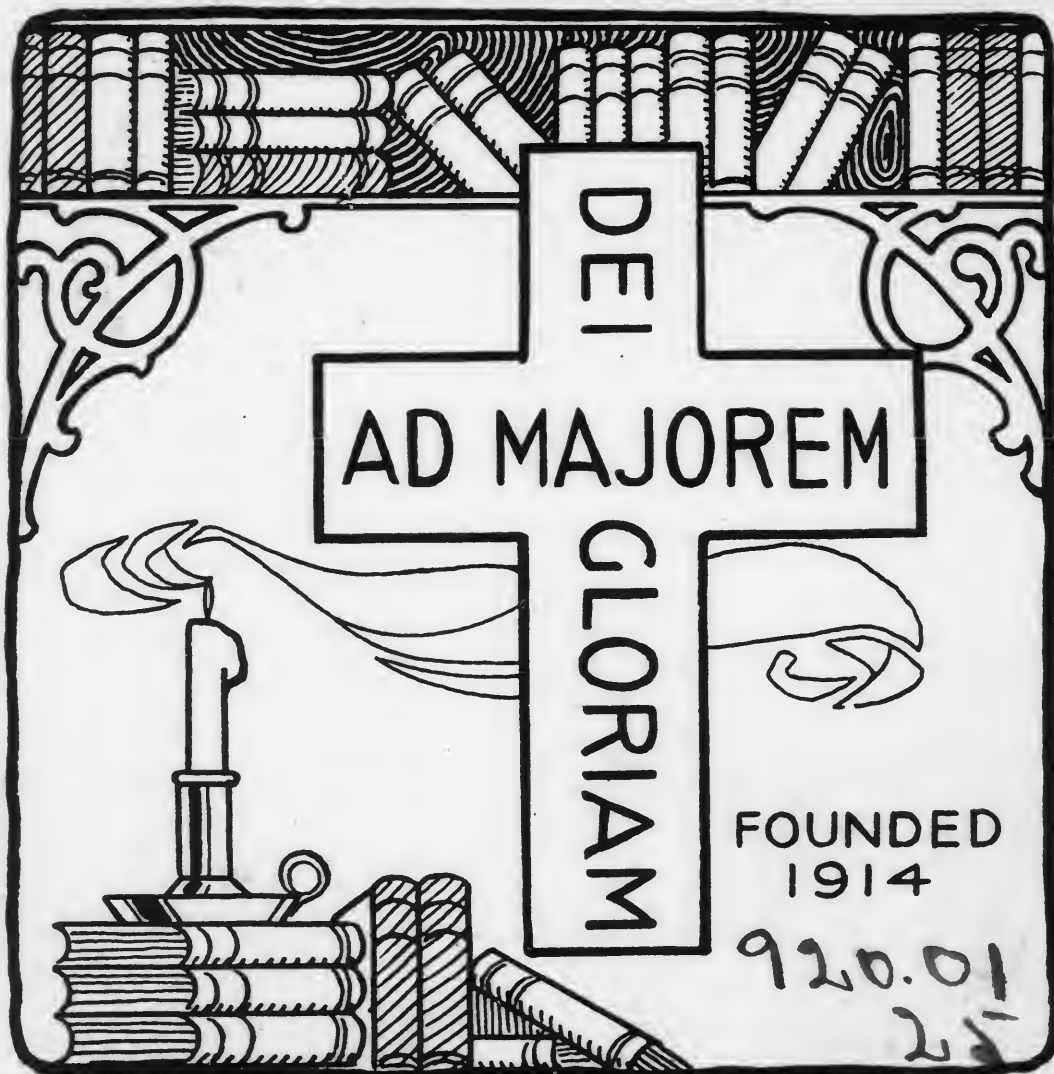
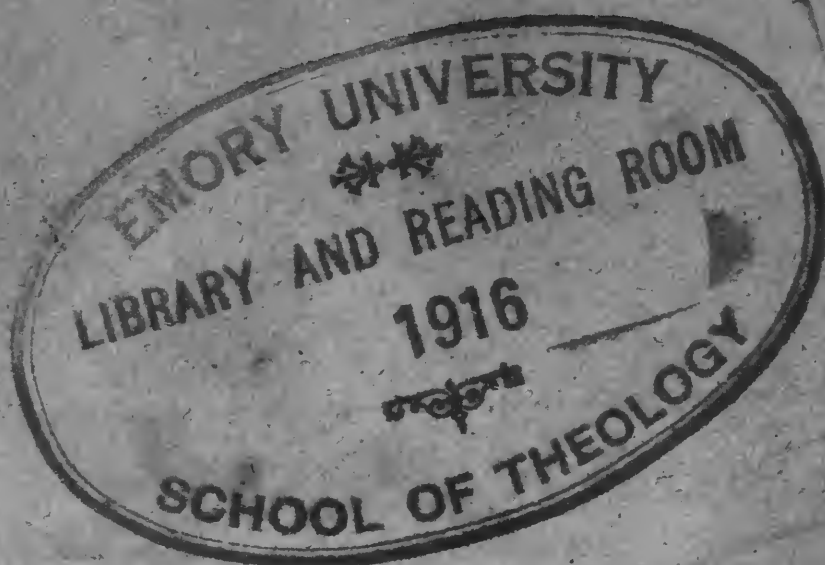


# School of Theology

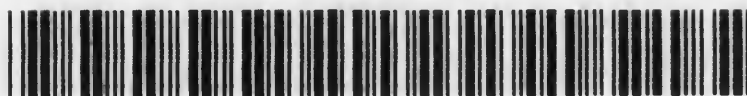


THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY  
GENERAL COLLECTION No. \_\_\_\_\_

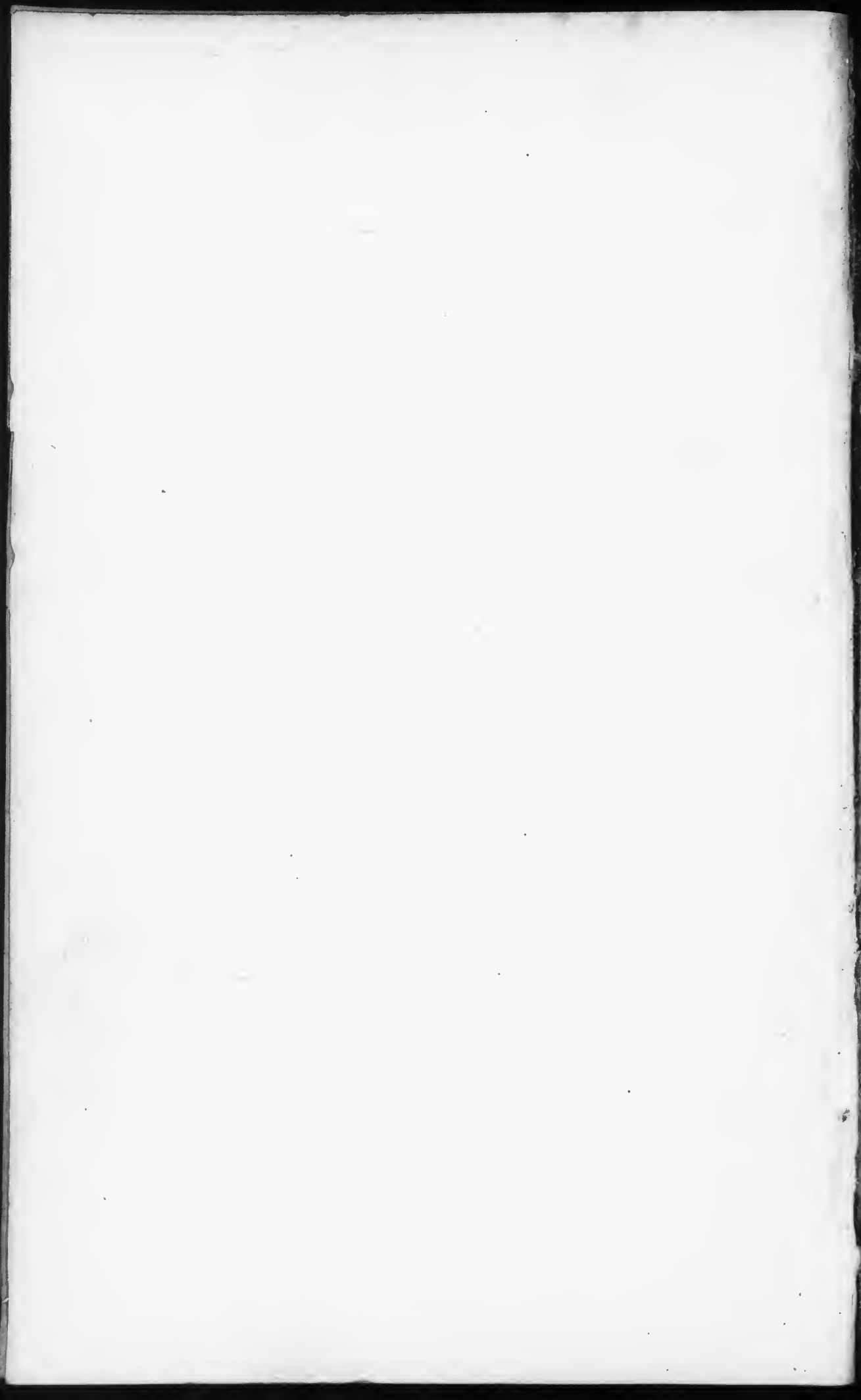
2513



EMORY UNIVERSITY

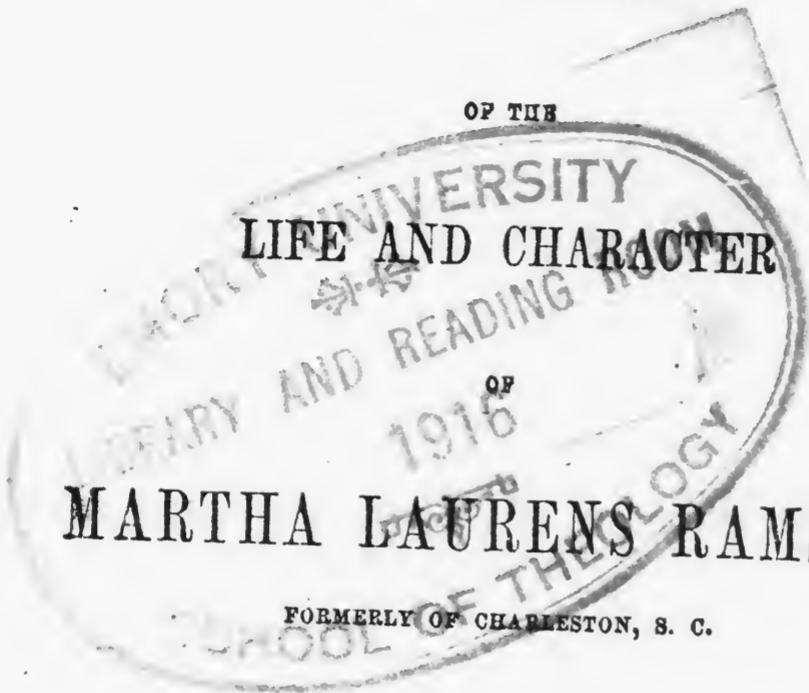


15181676



920.01  
25

A SKETCH  
OF THE  
LIFE AND CHARACTER  
OF  
MARTHA LAURENS RAMSEY,  
FORMERLY OF CHARLESTON, S. C.



COMPILED FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES,

---

BY  
REV. D. R. M'ANALLY.

---

LOUISVILLE, KY.  
SOLD BY THE SOUTHERN METHODIST BOOK CONCERN,  
E. STEVENSON, AGENT.  
1853.

BX 8495

R 3 M 3

(S)

---

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1853, by  
REV. D. R. M'ANALLY,  
in the Clerk's Office for the District of Missouri.

---

~~~~~  
Stereotyped and Printed by  
MORTON & GRISWOLD,  
Louisville, Ky.  
~~~~~

## P R E F A C E.

---

THE materials from which the following sketch has been compiled, came in possession of the writer several years ago, while traveling in the South, engaged in the regular work of the ministry. From the time at which he first saw them he felt satisfied that there were things connected with the history of Mrs. Ramsey which ought not to be suffered to pass away with those few to whom they were known; but amid the press of divers engagements, and, withal, mistrustful of his ability to give it that interest which its merits demanded, he suffered it to lie over from year to year, until some two years since, when an opportunity was afforded for compiling. Since that time, its publication in book form has been repeatedly urged by friends in whose judgment the writer had confidence, and who unhesitatingly expressed the opinion that it would

W 513

tend to advance the cause of true religion. Being a mere compilation, it claims no merit save that which is found to have been in the character of her whose history, in part, it gives; and all who attentively read it, will readily agree that the subject was no ordinary person.

Hoping that others of her sex may be encouraged to seek those high literary attainments, and that deep and fervent piety for which she was so eminent, the writer cheerfully gives this sketch to the reading public.

ST. LOUIS, MO., April, 1853.

LIFE AND CHARACTER  
OF  
MRS. MARTHA LAURENS RAMSEY.

---

CHAPTER I.

MARTHA LAURENS RAMSEY, daughter of Henry and Eleanor Laurens, was born in Charleston, South Carolina, on the third of September, 1759. Her paternal ancestors were French Protestants, and by the revocation of the edict of Nantes, were compelled to leave their native country, from whence they came to America, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, settled in South Carolina, and subsequently bore a conspicuous part in the American revolution.

Her father, Henry Laurens, was a prominent member of Congress from South Carolina, and President of that body in 1777. Soon after this, while on his way to Holland, as Ambassador from the United States, he was taken prisoner by the British, confined in the Tower, and treated with great rigor, until 1781. After his liberation he went to France, and subsequently joined the American ministers in signing the treaty of peace with Great Britain. He returned to Carolina, where he died in 1792. Her eldest brother, John Laurens, was a distinguished officer in the revolutionary war, in which capacity he rendered important services to his country until 1782, when, in an action with a small party of the enemy in his native State, he received a severe wound, of which he soon after died.

In the first year of her life, Martha Laurens was so severely attacked with small pox that, after lingering some days, she was thought to be dead, and was actually laid out preparatory to her funeral. "This," says Dr. Ramsey in his memoirs, "was done under an open window, instead of the close room in which she had been kept, according to the absurd mode of treating small pox in 1760. Dr. Moultrie, coming in at this crisis, pronounced her to be still alive, probably recalled to life by the fresh air of the open window. Under other circumstances she would shortly have been buried, as was then commonly done with persons who died of small pox in that year of extensive mortality. A valuable life was thus providentially saved for future usefulness."

At a very early period she manifested an

unusual capacity and eagerness for learning — so much so that by her third year she could readily read in any book, and, “what is extraordinary, in an inverted position without difficulty.” Possessing naturally much vivacity and a great flow of spirits, she was familiar with feats of activity, though not unattended with personal danger. Physical exertions, romantic projects, or excess of play, were preferred to a stagnant life, though her early sense of propriety and duty were such that at any moment she could be drawn off from these to the discharge of serious duties, or an engagement in serious business. Thus, while she possessed the heart and playfulness of the child, it was of a child who had already learned to obey the calls of duty rather than the promptings of inclination. As she grew up, her natural

activity of mind was exerted in the acquisition of the solid and ornamental parts of female education. She soon acquired a grammatical knowledge of the English and French languages, and considerable eminence in reading, writing, geography, the use of the globes, with geometry and mathematical science generally. Subsequently, she made herself familiar with the Latin and Greek classics, so that she was able and actually prepared her sons to enter what was then one of the best colleges in America.

In the eleventh year of her age she sustained the greatest of all earthly losses — the loss, by death, of her excellent and precious mother. Fortunately, however, for young Martha, that ere she was called hence, that mother had labored to instill into the mind of her daughter those sacred truths of

religion which were to fortify her against the vicissitudes and infirmities of her future life. These truths, inculcated with all the tenderness of maternal love, had taken deep hold upon the mind, so that the young and now motherless girl was already deeply impressed with a sense of her own depravity and guilt, and well instructed in the doctrines of redemption, through the sufferings and death of Christ. So far as the loss of her mother could be repaired, it was done by the maternal care of a pious aunt, who was well fitted to train up the orphan niece for both worlds. This was Mrs. Mary, wife of James Laurens, "To her and that of his brother, Henry Laurens committed the charge of his two daughters, while he went to superintend the education of his sons in Europe. There he continued till the end of 1774, when

love for his country brought him back to its defence against the aggressions of the British. Thus, while providence deprived Miss Laurens of the instructions and example of her natural mother, it raised up another friend for her, who performed the maternal duties with equal capacity, fidelity, and affection."

Soon after the return of Mr. Laurens from Europe to America, Martha, together with her sister Mary, afterwards the wife of Charles Pinckney, accompanied her uncle and aunt to Europe, where she remained during the revolutionary war, so that she was deprived of the company of her wise and excellent father during almost the whole of the interesting and important period extending from the eleventh to the twenty-second year of her life. She, however,

continued through all that time to receive from him letters filled with parental instruction, and marked with deep parental solicitude. These instructions referred not only to the particular condition in which she happened then to be placed, or the particular circumstances attending her at the time of writing, but also to her future course, and probable future destiny. Hence, from 1771 to 1775, they were such as were applicable to a beloved child growing up with fair prospects of an ample fortune; but at and after this latter period he warned her of the probability that his estate would be forfeited — that he and her brother would lose their lives in the contest for American liberty, and that she should prepare to maintain herself by her own exertions. Though these anticipations were not fully realized, the

expectation of them had doubtless much to do in assisting to form the solid education of her to whom the advice was given. In one of his letters from Philadelphia, dated August 18, 1771, Mr. Laurens says:

“Let all your reading, your study, and your practice tend to make you a wise and virtuous woman, rather than a fine lady. The former character always comprehends the latter; but the modern fine lady, according to the common acceptation, is too often found to be deficient both in wisdom and virtue. Strive then, my dearest girl, to be virtuous, dutiful, affable, courteous, modest, and be assured that you will become a fine lady. Set God before your eyes, my dear child; pray to Him; place your whole confidence in him, and strive to do His will; so shall you never be dismayed.”

In another, written from Charleston, 29th February, 1776, he says :

“When I look around me, and behold increasing preparations for civil war, every man seeming bent and determined to carry those preparations into execution to the last extremity ; when, therefore, I consider your estates in this country as being on the very precipice of bankruptcy, how can I forbear lamenting what will become of my dear sister — what will become of my dear Martha and Mary in case of my brother’s death ? Not only tears, but irresistible groans accompany this afflicting inquiry. After a moment’s pain, I console myself with this reply :

“God will take care of them — that God who led your ancestors through a cruel persecution, and through a wilderness a hundred years ago, and you through ten thousand

dangers, will not forsake your sister nor your children. Your brother will do well, and be made the guardian of your fatherless children after you are slaughtered. \* \*

It is my duty to warn you again, as I did in my last letter, to prepare yourself for a reverse of fortune — prepare for the trial of earning your daily bread by daily labor. This, whether it be matter of affliction — whether it be a subject of grief or not, will, according to present appearances, be your lot. My love for you constrains me to give you timely notice. I have done so with an aching heart and overflowing eyes. Methinks I hear you reply :

“ ‘ But, my dear papa, why will you make a sacrifice of your fortune and hazard the happiness of your children — labor day and night to earn poverty for yourself and them? ’ ”

I will answer briefly: It is the will of God that it should be so, and he gives me resolution to concur in, and to submit to his will. Now act well your part, my dear; love God, and all things will work together for good. \* \* \* \* \*

It would please me, it would rejoice me, to hear that you have cheerfully entered upon your new scene of life. That you earn as much every day by your needle as would pay your daily expenses."

These extracts give us some idea of the feelings with which the prominent actors in the American revolution entered upon that eventful struggle. They looked for their estates to be forfeited, their children to become penniless and houseless, and themselves to be the slaughtered victims of oppressive cruelty. Yet they believed it was

the will of God that they should maintain and defend their civil rights at whatever cost. Believing that in the providence of God the time had come when they would have to meet all the horrors of a civil war, and relying upon the justness of their cause, and the protection and blessings of their Heavenly Father, with strong arms and stout hearts they prepared themselves for the contest. When they looked at their suffering country, they felt and acted as patriots. When they thought of their helpless children, they felt, wept, and prayed as Christian fathers, consoled only in the belief that "God will protect and defend them."

Having been baptized by the ministry of what was, at that time, the established Church, or Church of England, at what particular time Miss Laurens was regularly

admitted to communion, cannot now be determined; but when, in her twelfth year, she was made the subject of converting grace, and what was at that time very rare among persons in her condition, professed to have the witness of God's spirit testifying with hers that she had passed from death unto life, and thenceforward to the day of her death, acted the part of an humble, intelligent, and consistent Christian. She gave every evidence that her conversion to God was thorough, radical, and scriptural; that his love was shed abroad in her heart by the Holy Ghost; that being justified by faith, she had peace with God, and could testify that he had power on earth to forgive sins. She could not only testify to the fact of a change of heart, but refer to the time when that change was effected. A time when,

after seeking, and sorrowing, and weeping, and praying, God spoke peace to her soul, and turned her mourning into rejoicing.

Accustomed even at that early age to reading and reflection, she now applied herself to these with renewed interest and greater diligence ; and by means of abridging, transcribing, and committing to memory, she was enabled to retain much of what she read. Deeply impressed with the importance of time, as well as the sin of spending it unprofitably, she assiduously applied herself to the work of improving her mind and heart, by which she succeeded in securing those rare and high attainments for which she was so remarkable in after life. Her reading seems ever to have been of the solid and useful kind. Unlike many of her age, she seems never to have contracted the taste

for light and useless, not to say injurious reading. She had, in all probability, been taught by her wise and virtuous mother and aunt, that our moral feelings, like our taste, may be excited by the conceptions of our imagination, scarcely less than the reality; and that she who could meditate with pleasure upon pictures of crime, and with pleasure read fictitious representations of crime, lacked nothing in heart of becoming an actress in the crimes of which she with pleasure read and thought. That no one became openly wicked until their imagination had been made familiar with vicious scenes, and that the imagination should be most carefully guarded by those who would avoid temptation, and make any progress in virtue. At all events, she appears never to have fallen into the common and ruinous practice of reading light and

fictitious works. Besides making regular advancement in her scientific and classical studies, she early became acquainted with the productions of such divines as Doddridge, Owen, Watts, Flavel, and Newton, who, with some others of like character, were her favorite authors, which she closely read with great pleasure and much profit.

When in her fifteenth year, she prepared and solemnly executed an instrument of writing, which she called "A self-dedication and solemn covenant with God." This, considering the age and circumstances of the writer, was a most remarkable production. The introduction run as follows :

*" Thursday, Dec. 23, 1773.*

" Being this day fourteen years and seven weeks old.

" I do this day, after full consideration

and serious deliberation, and after earnest prayer for the assistance of diving grace, resolve to surrender and devote my youth, my strength, my soul, with all I have, and all I am, to the service of that great and good God, who has preserved and kept me all my life until now, and who, in infinite compassion, has given me to see the folly of my ways, and by faith to lay hold on a dear Redeemer, and to obtain peace to my soul through his precious blood.

MARTHA LAURENS."

After this introduction, the writer goes on to humbly present before the Lord the whole frame of her mind and soul, together with all the members of her body, a living sacrifice, "holy and acceptable unto God;" and not only "consecrates all that she was, and all that she had, to his service, but humbly

resigned to His will all that she called hers, to be disposed of as He pleased," expressing her full and fixed determination to live for Him and Him alone.

What particular circumstance or circumstances, if any, led Miss Laurens to this course, it is impossible at this time to learn. Her husband, Dr. Ramsey, in his memoirs expresses the opinion that it was done "in conformity to the advice of Dr. Doddridge," and adds, "it is believed that she kept the transaction secret from all the world, and that the paper in question was never seen by any human being before her death, thirty-seven years after it was written." At the time of writing it, as she remarks, she was but little more than fourteen years old—the daughter of one of the first men in America—in good health, and with a fair

prospect of inheriting a large estate, both from her father and uncle — surrounded by doating friends, with every earthly comfort at command — what but the love of Christ, with a deep sense of religious duty and interest, could have induced her coolly and dispassionately to perform so solemn and pious an act? The only serious affliction she had ever experienced was that of the loss of her kind mother, some three years before, and whatever of grief the loss may have produced, the keenness of its edge must necessarily have been, ere this, blunted by time. There is every reason to believe that the act was one of mature reflection and close deliberation, while the fact of its having been for thirty-seven years closely kept from her most intimate friends shows that it was not one of ostentatious parade.

The probability is, that previously to this time Miss Laurens had felt that she lived beneath her privileges — that she enjoyed less of the divine favor, less of the inward comforts of religion, than was her privilege, and believing that to rise higher in the divine life, it was necessary for her to make an unreserved dedication of herself to God, she proceeded with the aid of grace to do this, and penned down her feelings and resolutions, that by subsequently recurring to the paper, her memory might be refreshed as to the solemn act itself, and the solemn obligations she had thus voluntarily taken upon herself. Her subsequent conduct affords sufficient evidence that her vows were not forgotten before the Lord. Can earth afford a more interesting sight than lovely youth thus giving itself up to God?

After this, we find that in her diary she recorded most earnest prayers for entire sanctification. She had given her heart to God, and her prayer was that He might

“Cleanse and keep it clean.”

In thus solemnly dedicating herself to God, Miss Laurens acted the part of a sincere and devoted Christian. To make an unreserved dedication of one's self to God, is not only in accordance with the teachings of the sacred scriptures, but is absolutely necessary to the attainment of that Christian character and inward peace essential to the soul's welfare here, and its salvation hereafter. “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” This, together with non-conformity to the

world, and being "transformed by the renewing of the mind," the Apostle sets forth as necessary in order to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Instances are recorded in the Old Testament, of covenants being made with God, written down, and signed by the persons thus entering into covenant relation with the Most High. Our God is a covenant-keeping God, and those who would share the fullness of his blessings here, and the glories of his kingdom hereafter, must be His, by covenant relation, as well as by creation, redemption, and preservation. Not that such covenants should be written and signed to make them valid, and yet the writer of this sketch can see no impropriety in this, when under circumstances like those just noticed.

There can be no doubt in the minds of those who are at all correctly informed on this subject, but that the principal cause why professed Christians often enjoy so little of the life and power of religion — why they are weak, halting, and almost powerless for good, is to be found in the fact that they neglect to make an entire consecration of themselves, soul, body, time, talents, influence, and all to the living God. Hence, they are less holy, less happy, and less useful, than they otherwise would be. The naturally wayward human heart needs to be bound to its Heavenly Father by the strongest possible ties, and he who knows its proneness to wander, together with the many allurements, besetments, temptations, and difficulties which throng the Christian's pathway, will not wonder that a sincere seeker after

eternal life should, even at so young an age, bind herself by so solemn a covenant, to be the Lord's, and His only. No doubt, but that in the above instance, it did much, all through her subsequent life, to increase the watchfulness, prayerfulness, and humility of her by whom it was done ; and where there is equal sincerity, and equal intelligent devotion in the consecration, a similar course will produce a similar result.

## CHAPTER II.

WHEN Miss Laurens embarked for England, as noticed in the preceding chapter, she had destroyed the greater part of her manuscripts, which were numerous, consisting, as the author of the memoirs informs us, "of devotional remarks on passing events, statements of the religious exercises of her mind, a diary, and extracts from books she had read. This destruction she often regretted, but consented to it from the prospect of an itinerant life during her exile from home, and still more from the unsettled affairs of her native country, on the commencement of the revolutionary war."

These numerous manuscripts, whatever they contained, were all written before she

had attained her sixteenth year. While in England she wrote much, most of which was subsequently destroyed, for reasons similar to those which led to the destruction of the first. She resided in various parts of England during the early period of the American revolution, "improving her mind, and preparing herself for meeting the contemplated loss of her father, brother, and fortune by the events of war, and at the same time doing every kind office of love to her afflicted uncle."

Here, also, she fortunately made the acquaintance of many excellent and pious persons, among whom was the celebrated Countess of Huntingdon, by whom she was much noticed, and in whose society she enjoyed much pleasure, and derived much profit. How greatly she prized such society

may be learned, in part, from the following extracts taken from a number of papers written while in England, and preserved by an intimate friend. It should not be forgotten that all these papers were written between her sixteenth and nineteenth years. Speaking of a day spent with pious associates, she says :

“Blessed be God for this day’s entertainment. How sweet is the society of lively Christians, when we meet together and spend the hours, not in idle chit-chat about dress or weather, or such unprofitable themes, but in mutual exhortation and encouragement. How comfortably have I passed this day. In the morning I was at the sanctuary, heard the word of salvation, and sat with pleasure under the teaching of the gospel. When I returned, met with dear fellow members, and

adored together the name of Jesus our Lord. In the afternoon, I visited serious friends, and entered on the delightful subject; talked of redeeming love and Christian meekness: and again this evening met with an acquaintance of the same mind, and renewed the delightful converse: and now, at night, I have been blessed in my retirement, and had great enlargement in prayer, both alone and with my servant. I cannot close a day so distinguished for spiritual mercies, without holy elevation — without a song of praise — nor sleep till I have rendered thanks. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. I will praise the Lord while I live, yea, while I have my being will I sing praises to my God. My heart is fixed, O God, my

heart is fixed, and through time and eternity I shall be thus employed, singing songs of everlasting triumph, and loud hallelujahs to the slain Lamb, the purchaser of all our hopes, and the ground of our rejoicing."

At another time, after having been in company where she looked for but little religion or religious conversation, and having been agreeably disappointed, she penned the following:

"O my God! minutes come quickly, but mercies were more swift and quick than they. I look for sorrow, and behold joy! for vain conversation, and behold, heavenly society! for trifling and levity, and behold, reproof, exhortation and edification! Thus it is that thou graciously dealest with me; hearing the prayers of thine unworthy creature, and blessing her when she least expects

it. O how I love the company of pious souls, and to join in praising the name of Jesus ! but if this be delightful, these imperfect services so pleasant, what must it be to meet with the blessed society above, where, without sin, and free from interruption and clog, without fetters and without cloy, I shall join with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven. I shall laud and magnify His glorious name, evermore praising Thee and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts ; the whole heaven is full of thy glory ; glory be to thee, O Lord ! How charming to tell to listening seraphs the wonders of redeeming love, and

‘ With-transporting joys recount,  
‘ The labors of my feet ; ’

to rehearse my trials, conflicts, and temptations, and in harmonious strains

‘T’ ascribe my vic’try to the Lamb,  
My conquest to his death.’

Faith looks forward with delight to this happy period, and my soul stretches her wings, and wishes to be gone. Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell in Mesech, and have my habitation in the tents of Kedar. O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee to the haven of eternal rest, to the bosom of my God.

“He is altogether lovely, the chief of ten thousand, fairer than the fairest, and the only fair.

“The fondness of the most enraptured lover, the tenderness of the dearest friend, is perfect hatred compared to the love of Jesus; all the ideas we can form of things sweet, amiable, and engaging, are mere deformity to the beauties of Emmanuel.

His winning charms are sufficient to captivate the most unfeeling breast, and warm the coldest heart. Was ever adamant so hard as mine, or flint so stubborn? Was ever ice so cold, or affections so frozen? Yet the Heavenly Bridegroom overcomes. His persuasive energy is irresistible, and the marks of love graven in his hands and feet speak to my inmost soul. Jesus, my beloved, thy name gives joy to my desponding heart, and cheers my drooping spirits; Jesus! harmonious sound, life-giving word; again and again will I repeat it with fresh delights, and exult in my knowledge of this name. Let heaven and earth re-echo with the sweet name of Jesus, and let the hosts on high, and saints below, join hearts and tongues to celebrate it. \* \* \* \*

I long to take my place at Jesus' feet and

leave this vale of tears, this thorny wilderness. Come quickly, dear Saviour, quickly come, and bear me to thy blessed abode. Earth is a tiresome place; yet would I not repine, or be impatient, but resignedly do thy work, and wait thy will. Increase my trials, so thou increase my faith, and welcome crosses, so thou sanctify them. Yet it is but little that I can do for thee, and my utmost services are not worth the name; therefore, I plead that thou wouldst hasten thy coming, and deliver me from my bondage. Yet a few more weary steps, and I hope my feet shall rest upon the everlasting hills; and when the awful, though wished for moment arrives, be thou then with me. Put thine everlasting arms underneath me, for my support; give strength and confidence to my departing spirit. Let the recollection

of the firm covenant between us then sustain me, and in mercy gild the dark valley, and brighten the gloomy shadow; enable me, a poor, weak, undeserving sinner, to do honor to religion in that last finishing scene, and to glorify thee, dear Lord, with my expiring breath."

"Then shall I with thee remain,  
Partner of thine endless reign;  
Then thy face unclouded see,  
Find my heaven of heavens in thee.

*Amen, Hallelujah."*

Such sentiments are alike creditable to the head and heart; evidences of the soundness of the one, and the goodness of the other. Such feelings are experienced or appreciated only by those who have been taught in the school of Christ; by those only who have counted "all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of

Christ Jesus," and are ever ready to deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow him.

It must not be supposed, however, that the subject of this sketch was without difficulties, trials, temptations, and sorrows. Often do we find her grieving over the remains of the carnal mind. Often do we find her in strong and fearful contests with the enemy of souls, and as often conquering through the power of the faith of the gospel of Christ. Well did she know what it was to have

"Fightings without, and fears within ;"

and as well was she convinced of the power of that faith which "works by love, and purifies the heart." Situated as she was, she must necessarily have been exposed to many and sore trials. Trials of her faith,

trials of her patience, trials of her fortitude, and of her integrity and fidelity as a Christian. Raised, and required to move in the gay and fashionable circles of society, at a period when experimental religion was at an exceedingly low ebb, she often saw much and heard much, which to her was extremely painful. During a great part of the time she resided in England her situation was any thing but pleasant. She was often obliged to hear her country abused, and her own dear father denounced as a fomentor of strife; a reckless aspirant, seeking his own aggrandizement at the cost of his country; a traitor to his king and a rebel against his government; who deserved nothing but a traitor's doom and a traitor's fate. Added to this, what property she had was in America; war raged; remittances were cut off, and

poverty and want were ready to stare her in the face. Soon her father was taken prisoner and confined in the Tower; and soon after, the sad news that her beloved brother had fallen in battle reached her ears. Her uncle, under whose protection she lived, had for years been in feeble and constantly declining health; it was evident his end was near, which, when it should come, bid fair to extinguish the last ray of earthly hope that remained for his afflicted and orphan niece. But her trust was in that Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. In him who had said: "I will never leave nor forsake thee." And wonderfully did his grace comfort and sustain her amid these trying scenes. Closer and closer did she cleave to him, and brighter and brighter did his love dwell in her heart and shine forth in her life.

After the treaty of France with Congress, in 1778, Mr. James Laurens, together with his wife and nieces, removed from England to France, and on account of the cheapness of living, settled at Vigon. At this place, in 1784, death released him from all earthly sufferings. When this occurred, Miss Laurens was with her father in England. Here she at one time suddenly started from her bed and pronounced that her uncle had just died; and, at her request, the day and hour were carefully noted down by an attendant. "In the ordinary course of the posts between the two countries, intelligence of his death arrived, and the day and hour of it precisely corresponded with what had been recorded as aforesaid in England."

Without any attempt to explain or account for this singular occurrence, it is recorded

here upon the authority of him, who was subsequently the husband of Miss Laurens — the talented and justly celebrated David Ramsey, M. D., of South Carolina.

Another singular instance in the history of this young lady, may be mentioned upon the same authority. The Doctor says :

“It is remarkable, that from and after the time Col. John Laurens was killed in South Carolina, August 27th, 1782, his sister, then in Vigon, never put up a prayer for him, though she was previously in the habit of praying frequently for him, and his death was unknown to her for more than two or three months after it had taken place. She mentioned the fact without pretending to account for it, and added that she several times wondered at her omission of that usual part of her duty, and resolved

to retire for the purpose of praying for her brother ; but that in every case some sudden call or other unexpected event interposed to prevent her doing so."

Should the reader be inclined to think that the present writer is making heavy drafts upon his credulity, let him remember the authority upon which the statements are made. Dr. Ramsey was no visionary enthusiast — nor one of whom it can be said that he wrote without thought, or stated things as facts without a sufficient basis on which to rest them.

During her residence in England and France, Miss Laurens was not only exposed to severe trials from outward circumstances, but often subjected to most sore and distressing inward conflicts. In this state of mind she was most likely placed when she

wrote the paper from which the following extracts are taken :

“ I am often much distressed by fears of apostasy. This dread upon my mind keeps me very low, and I often weep at the very apprehension of it. I cry day and night to my God, and importunately wrestle with Him for preserving grace. \* \* \* \* \*

Dear Jesus ! hear — in pity hear me : after such solemn covenanting — such awful transactions — such rapturous endearments, let not earth or hell tempt me to violate my vows, nor the united force of men and devils have power to break the bonds which bind me to Thee. O never let me perjure myself — never deny or forsake my Lord — for with whom else can I find equal happiness, or what shall recompense me for the loss of thy favor.

O my Redeemer ! I am willing to take up the cross ; to go with thee to prison and to death — to bear shame — reproach — contumely — loss of fortune — reputation, and even life itself for thy sake — but not able to do the least of them. It is thou only, who hast worked in me the will, that must give me the power.”

Frequently she complained most bitterly, and most sincerely lamented having fallen into “light and frivolous conversation.” This she regarded as altogether inconsistent with the character and profession of a Christian, and as a sin against which it was her special duty always to guard. On one occasion when about to go into company, where this kind of conversation would prevail, she retired, and after deliberation, wrote the following :

“I am now going into gay, worldly, and I even fear that I shall meet with profane company. O, that through grace I may have a beaming spirit, and remembering the honorable name which I bear, may not be ashamed to act as a Christian, and let religion tincture every word and action. O Heavenly Father, now shed abroad in my heart thy Holy Spirit, and let nothing but holiness proceed out of my mouth. Enable me so to demean myself, that *all* may take knowledge of me that I have been with Jesus. Let the law of kindness dwell upon my tongue ; and teach me to discountenance sin in the very spirit of humility. Show me the effectual moments—the proper opportunities for speaking in defence of the gospel — for glorifying the name of Jesus, and give me a heart to embrace them. Let not the fear of singularity

make me a babbler — but if I can bear no innocent and useful part in conversation, keep me silent. Let the remembrance of my solemn vows be ever before me, and enable me this day to stand fast in the covenant of Christ, joyfully confessing him before men. Hear me, O God! for thy mercy's sake, and have pity on a poor frail creature."

This was probably written in France, where, at that time, the simple and primitive forms of religion were so obscured and perverted by the mummeries of the Romish Church as scarcely to be recognized, while the life and power thereof, were almost every where denied. Hence the great caution with which Miss Laurens went into society, and the earnestness with which she sought for grace to demean herself as a

Christian should. How different this, from the course of too many of similar age. What incalculable evils are often done the cause of religion by young persons who profess it, going thoughtlessly into gay company, and participating in light and trifling conversation, and partaking of worldly amusements. How much evil would be prevented, how much good done, if all professed followers of Christ pursued a course similar to that just noticed. But to return.

At another time, after having been present at some of those "fashionable visits," where worldly matters were all the talk, the subject of this sketch retired and penned the following:

"How disgusting these vain visits to my sin-sick soul. While they examine and talk of laces, dresses, ornaments and finery, I

wish to converse with the hillocks of mortality, to know the full meaning of that sentence, "'Tis the body of the curse," and remember that we should not have needed cloaks, if sin had not deformed us, and made covering necessary for the hiding of our shame. Dear Jesus, faithful friend, when they are telling of the agreeableness of this party, that set, and the other amusements, I long to get away from among them to sit at thy feet, to hear thy precious voice, and commune with thee. They know not the import of these words: 'I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in me.' They know not the pleasures of the way, or the sweetness of thy love, but fondly dream of bliss in fleeting enjoyments. They pursue a shadow, and grasp at a phantom. No, dear Christ, nothing below

thyself can satisfy an immortal soul, or give it content. There can be no comfort but in thy favor. The whole circle of worldly delights will prove themselves in the end naught save vanity; and sooner or later never fail to give their followers vexation of spirit.

No, 'tis in vain to seek for bliss,  
For bliss can ne'er be found,  
Till we arrive where Jesus is,  
And tread on grace's ground."

These extracts, together with the facts narrated, will serve to give the reader some idea of the religious character and feelings of one whom it will be readily acknowledged was no ordinary youth. Her piety was rational, scriptural, and consistent. The Bible, with Henry's Commentary, and other available helps to the understanding it, were

her constant companions. She read to learn, and learned to practice. Great pains had been taken to form her mind superior to the common accidents of life and the groundless fears indulged by many of her sex, and well had these efforts succeeded. Holiness her object, and truth her guide, she readily applied herself to the discharge of the various duties which devolved upon her, and prosecuted them with fidelity and constancy, studiously avoiding sickly sentimentalism, and foolish affectation. An obedient daughter, a devoted sister, an affectionate niece, a kind mistress and faithful friend, and above all a plain and humble Christian; it is not strange that she was respected, admired and loved. As a Christian, we often find her rejoicing in God, and exulting in the comforts of heart-felt religion; yet her joy seemed

never to degenerate into carelessness, or her love with familiarity. A sense of her sinfulness, unworthiness, and helplessness, humbled her soul while she magnified that grace which taught her heart to fear, and then

“Her fears relieved.”

Her love as a Christian was ardent—often venting itself in shouts of praise, yet she was not fanatical. She rejoiced, but she rejoiced with trembling. In hours of severe trial or sore affliction, the recollection that she had solemnly dedicated herself to God, gave her great comfort, while in seasons of prosperity, it served to guard and restrain her. She seemed to feel and act under the belief, that God had condescended to become a partner in her covenant, that he had accepted and ratified it, taken her with all she had, and all she was, agreeably

to the offering she had made, and was continually with her as her defender, protector, and comforter. She worshipped an omnipresent God, whose eyes she knew was ever upon her, who was about her path in the day, and her bed at night—in whose presence she ever was, and who was ever ready to uphold, sustain, and defend her. An omniscient God who knew her heart, and the hearts of all—who knew what was best for her, both in reference to this life, and that which was to come. A holy and just God, who could not look upon sin with allowance, to whom all impure thoughts or desires were offensive, and before whom they were sin. Yet a merciful God, who, “like as a father pitieth his children,” so he “pitieth them that fear him,” who “keepeth mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgres-

the maintenance of a Christian character, and a true Christian enjoyment. Idleness of mind is no less reprehensible than idleness of hands. Both are alike inconsistent with a Christian's duty, and a Christian's interest, and he or she who would serve God acceptably, must be actively, vigilantly, and constantly engaged in doing good. It is thus, and thus alone, that the grace of justification can be retained, the moral power increased—the influence for good extended—and the love made perfect. There are good reasons to fear that hundreds of professed Christians deprive themselves of much enjoyment, prevent much good, and bring upon both themselves and others much evil, simply by a neglect to make it a matter of conscience to be always usefully engaged. In the case under consideration, there is

seen one among the many happy results of uniting a habit of diligence in business with a fervency of spirit.

Seldom if ever was there uttered a more striking truth than that contained in the familiar words of the nursery rhymes :

“The devil finds some mischief still,  
For idle hands to do.”

sion, and sin," and who could be just, and yet the justifier of them who believe in Christ. A faithful God, who would never leave nor forsake the helpless soul that trusted in him. Her zeal was ardent, but it was according to knowledge. She had a keen sense of what the world calls honor and respectability, yet she regarded true respectability as consisting in goodness of heart and purity of life, and sought that honor which comes from God, as preferable to all else. Such was the subject of our sketch from her sixteenth to her nineteenth year.

While she learned from the Bible that she should be "fervent in spirit," she learned also that she should be "diligent in business." Hence her habits of industry and economy were remarkable. She was economical of

her time, her money, and of all she had. Regarding herself as the steward of the Lord, she acknowledged that these were not her own, and should always be used for the good of mankind and the glory of God. In the various branches of domestic labors, she was ready, active, and prompt, neither afraid nor ashamed to engage in any thing proper and useful. She read, wrote, worked, prayed, and lived by rule. Having a time for every duty, and doing every thing in its time, she was enabled to accomplish much for herself, and much for others.

And in this she did but the work of a true Christian. To be diligently and profitably engaged at all times, and under all circumstances, is not only consonant with the teachings of the holy scriptures, but absolutely necessary to a growth in grace, and

the maintenance of a Christian character, and a true Christian enjoyment. Idleness of mind is no less reprehensible than idleness of hands. Both are alike inconsistent with a Christian's duty, and a Christian's interest, and he or she who would serve God acceptably, must be actively, vigilantly, and constantly engaged in doing good. It is thus, and thus alone, that the grace of justification can be retained, the moral power increased—the influence for good extended—and the love made perfect. There are good reasons to fear that hundreds of professed Christians deprive themselves of much enjoyment, prevent much good, and bring upon both themselves and others much evil, simply by a neglect to make it a matter of conscience to be always usefully engaged. In the case under consideration, there is

seen one among the many happy results of uniting a habit of diligence in business with a fervency of spirit.

Seldom if ever was there uttered a more striking truth than that contained in the familiar words of the nursery rhymes :

“ The devil finds some mischief still,  
For idle hands to do.”

### CHAPTER III.

WE come now to contemplate the character of Miss Laurens as developed under other and different circumstances from those alluded to in the last chapter.

The clouds of adversity which had so long hung heavily over her, began to disperse. The civil affairs in America had brightened, her father had been released from prison, and after a separation of seven years she had joined him in Paris, where she presided over his domestic concerns while he assisted in the negotiations which terminated in national peace, and the acknowledgment of the independence of the United States. The transition from a nurse's chamber under straitened

circumstances, in a remote country-place, to the head of the table of a minister plenipotentiary, in one of the most enlightened, refined, and fashionable cities in the world, was certainly very great. But amid the gaieties of that gay city her Bible was her companion and counsellor, as it had been while in comparative obscurity, midst scenes of sore affliction. It had taught her to bear adversity with patience and resignation, and now kept her from the intoxication and follies which are too apt to grow out of prosperity.

As an instance of the generousness of her nature it may be here mentioned, that about this time her father presented her at one time with five hundred guineas. As has already been noted, she had for several years been living under restricted circumstances, owing to the impossibility of receiving sup-

plies ; and this liberal donation seems to have been designed to make up for the suspension of her father's usual liberality. A very small portion of it, however, was appropriated to her own use. With the principal part, she purchased one hundred copies of the New Testament in French—all that were then in that market ; gave them away among the poor in and near Vigon, where she had resided ; and established a school for the gratuitous instruction of the youth of the same place ; engaged a teacher and constituted a fund to defray its annual expenses. This school continued in a prosperous condition for many years, and no doubt exerted a most healthy influence upon the minds and hearts of scores and hundreds who otherwise would have lived and died in ignorance, and perhaps crime.

In further commendation of her generosity, it may be mentioned, that her uncle, Mr. James Laurens, having no children of his own, proposed to leave her at his death the bulk of his estate. But she positively and peremptorily declined the proposition, as its acceptance would be contrary to the reasonable expectations of her brothers and sister. The will was therefore framed agreeably to her wishes; "but the testator, in addition to a child's share, left her a specific legacy of five hundred pounds sterling," declaring it to be "a token of his friendship for her, and an acknowledgment for the services she had rendered to him and his family, and for her good and gentle conduct upon all occasions."

In 1785, after an absence "comprehending something more than the whole period of

the American revolution,” and after leading an unsettled life for ten years, Miss Laurens found herself quietly at home in her own native and beautiful South Carolina. Here, on the 23d of January, 1787, she was united in holy wedlock to Dr. David Ramsey, the talented physician, the able historian, and the devout Christian. If confidence may be placed — and certainly it may — in the recorded testimony of either or both, a more happy union rarely, if ever took place. During the sixteen years subsequent to her marriage, Mrs. Ramsey “became the mother of eleven children, eight of whom survived.” And “now,” says the author of the memoirs, “she displayed the same virtuous habits, and the same energy of character, in taking care of her children, in promoting her husband’s happiness, and making a well ordered home

his chief delight, that had formerly distinguished Miss Laurens in acquiring useful knowledge, and discharging the duties of a daughter, a sister, and a niece. Soon after she became a mother, she studied with deep interest most of the esteemed practical treatises on education both in French and English, that she might be better informed of the nature and extent of her new duties. She gave a decided preference to the writings of Mr. Locke, and Dr. Witherspoon, on that subject. The object she proposed to herself, was, to obtain for her children health of body and a well regulated mind. To secure the former, they were, from their birth, daily washed in cold water; and throughout the whole period of infancy permitted to expose themselves, with uncovered feet, to wet and cold, and all the varieties

and sudden changes of Carolina weather. To favor the latter, they were taught to curb their tempers; to subject their passions to the supreme dominion of reason and religion; to practice self-denial; to bear disappointment, and to resist the importunity of present pleasure or pain, for the sake of what reason pronounces fit to be done or borne. As soon as they were capable of receiving religious instruction, she liberally imparted it; and early taught them their miserable and corrupted state by nature: that they were born into a world of sin and misery, surrounded with temptations, and without a possibility of salvation, but by the grace of God and a participation in the benefits procured for sinners by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ; and, at the same time, that God was the hearer of prayer, the tenderest of fathers,

and the best of friends, to all who put their trust in him. She early taught them to read their Bibles. That this might be done pleasantly, she connected with it Mrs. Trimmer's prints of Scripture Histories. That it might be done with understanding, she made them read in connection with their Bibles, Watts' short view of the whole of scripture history; and as they advanced to proper age, Newton on the Prophecies, and such books as connect sacred with profane history, and the Old with the New Testament—so that the Bible, though written in periods widely remote from each other, might appear to them a uniform, harmonious system of Divine truth. Of this blessed book, she enjoined upon them daily to read a portion, and to prize it as the standard of faith and practice; as a communication from heaven on eternal

concerns ; as the word of God, pointing out the only way to salvation ; as a letter of love, sent from their heavenly Father to direct their wandering feet to the paths of truth and happiness.”

She seemed fully conscious of the fact, that precept alone was not sufficient ; that unaccompanied by practice, it would be far less likely to accomplish the desired end ; hence, by her example she sought to illustrate, and enforce the precepts she gave them. She enjoined it upon her children to be mild, forbearing, and forgiving ; and she gave them the example — to pray, and she prayed with them ; to read the scriptures, and she read with them. “ In every period of her adult age, whether married or single, when, from accidental circumstances, she was the head of the family, and in health,

she daily read to her domestic circle a portion of the holy scriptures, and prayed with them, and regularly every Sunday with her young white and black family, in addition to catechetical instructions given to both at the same time. Her manner of reading with her children, and instructing her servants, was somewhat peculiar. She seated them around her, and alternately with her children read verses from the Bible, or sentences from religious books, so as to teach them at the same time by her example, the art of reading with emphasis and propriety. From what was read, such remarks were made by her, and such explanations given, as circumstances seemed to require. These exercises were sometimes varied by reading in the same manner the New Testament in Greek, with her sons, and in French with her

daughters. This course of moral instruction was continued as long as it pleased God to continue her on earth."

While such great anxiety was felt, such care taken and labor bestowed to give her children a correct moral training, she was far from neglecting their mental culture. As has been already remarked, by her own labor, and almost, if not altogether, entirely unassisted, she prepared her sons for college, by imparting that instruction in the sciences and classics, which enabled them to enter regular college classes: and with the aid of a female friend, she carried her daughters through those studies then taught in the best boarding-schools. In this work she labored with great industry and perseverance. Her manner of teaching was far beyond that generally practiced in her day. For her

first children she compiled an English grammar, being dissatisfied with what had been written on that subject by Ashe, Lowth, and others ; but laid hers aside after the publication of Murray's grammar, receiving it as rendering plain that, which by his predecessors had been left obscure. Possessing more than ordinary abilities ; more than ordinary advantages ; and taking more than ordinary pains, it would have been surprising had her children not made rapid proficiency. She taught them to read the books which she put into their hands, carefully, and repeatedly, till the substance, rather than the words, was imprinted on their minds. That she might the better succeed, she prepared a series of questions, particularly in Asiatic, European, and Biblical history, embracing the leading topics to which she

wished to direct their minds ; and these questions she expected them to answer from their general knowledge of the subject, without committing to memory any particular parts.

Her own reading was varied and extensive. Besides a general acquaintance in the circle of polite literature, and a knowledge of the more solid and rigid branches of scientific and classical learning, she was well read in practical theology ; rarely, however, reading that which was merely speculative. “ A few fundamental doctrines, such as free salvation by the atoning sacrifice of the co-equal Son of God, and sanctification by the Spirit, she regarded as essential, and worth contending for, but disputes on unessential points, she considered as injurious to the peace, harmony, and best interests of religion,

and would not waste her time in studying them any further than making up her opinion on particular points, from what appeared to her own mind to be revealed in the word of God. If that was silent, or did not decide for, or against any opinion, or practice, she took no further pains in its investigation." To her knowledge of science and theology, she added that of medicine, reading with care and attention, such works as were usually put into the hands of medical students. So general was her acquaintance with the theory of this profession, that her talented husband in his memoirs, publicly acknowledges his indebtedness for her assistance; and her venerable father on his death bed, declined any other medical attendant.

"The number of books she read was astonishingly great, and her memory uncom-

monly strong in retaining their contents. She could recite nearly the whole of Young's Night Thoughts without book. Psalm and prayer books were to her unnecessary; as their contents were imprinted on her mind. With the holy scriptures she was intimately acquainted, and could readily quote or turn to any text or passage bearing on any present subject of conversation."

Her anxiety and labors for her children ceased only at her death. When absent from her, she embraced every opportunity of counseling and instructing them by letters. A few extracts from letters to her absent children will here be introduced. The following was written to her daughter, when absent only for a few days, on a short excursion to the country in the vicinity of Charleston.

“ On Sundays I always think of you more earnestly, than on other days. All that regards you, regards me ; but what regards your religious concerns interests me deeply. I hope my dear child, in the midst of business or pleasure, never forgets that she is born for eternity : never omits praying to God ; and if you would live safely or happily, never content yourself with the devotions of the morning or evening, but often in the course of the day send up the prayer of the heart to God. This may be done in company, in business, in the midst of innocent pleasure, and is a delightful exercise of the heart, and a guard on the conduct. O, how happy should I be, to have you, my darling child, thus to live in the fear of the Lord all the day long. \* \* \* \*

I think the serious observation of the

Sabbath is not enough attended to, even among professing families; but, in other cases, it is often a day of the greatest folly, because a day of the greatest leisure. In proportion as a respect for that day, and its institutions are neglected or carelessly attended to; in the same proportion will the religious principle decline, and the practical concerns of eternity be carelessly managed. As a parent, then, full of anxiety for my children in every respect, but most of all for their eternal interests, I cannot but regret every Sunday which I think they spend in a manner not the best calculated to promote these interests, and feel it my duty to warn you never to forget that the Sunday is not common time, and according to existing circumstances, to do all that you prudently can, not only to observe it your-

self, but to make a conscience of not being ashamed of such observance."

Here we have an expression of a feeling and sentiment, which belongs to every intelligent and truly pious Christian. A solemn reverence for the institutions and services of the Holy Sabbath—with a full conviction that on its proper observance, greatly depend the religious interests and prosperity of the individual Christian, in any and every given case. And what in this respect is true of an individual, is true of a church, and of a community of individuals. Neither can be truly pious or truly prosperous without remembering "the Sabbath day to keep it holy." As is remarked, in the foregoing extract, "the Sunday is not common time," and whoever expects to serve God, meet his approbation, and be at last saved

in heaven, must not use it for common purposes or devote it to common pursuits. How the subject of this sketch observed that holy day, we have already seen, in part—and in this, as every other Christian duty, she rigidly practiced that which she taught her children.

To her son David, who had just left for college, Mrs. Ramsey wrote as follows:

“CHARLESTON, May 7, 1810.

The first thing I did when you left me, dear David, was to retire for a few moments to your chamber, and relieve my laboring heart, by commending you solemnly and affectionately to the good providence of our heavenly Father. I composed myself, as soon as possible, and set about my accustomed domestic duties.

While in your chamber I discovered the

little treatise — Dr. Waterhouse's lecture to the students of the University of Cambridge on smoking tobacco — which your father had requested you to read, and which in the main I approve of so highly, that I have given away half a dozen to persons in whom I am much less interested than in you. I sent it after you by Cooney, who says you received it safely. I hope its contents will not be lost upon you, nor the book itself lost by you.

It will be no disappointment to me, or rather it will give me no pain to learn, that you have not entered the junior class: to whatever class you belong, do your duty in it. Be respectful to your superiors, live affectionately with your equals, make yourself a party in no broils; but mind your own business — give dignity to the Carolinian

name ; write to me accurately on every subject which concerns you. Be not ashamed of religion ; read your Bible diligently — it will not only make you wise unto salvation, but you will find in it excellent directions for your conduct in this life. Your grandfather Laurens used to say, if men made a good use of only the Book of Proverbs, there would be no bankruptcies ; no failures in trade ; no family dissensions ; none of those wide-spreading evils, which, from the careless conduct of men in the common concerns of life, desolate human society ; and I assure you the more you read this divine book, the more you will love and value it.”

Again, writing to the same, under date of May 14, 1810, she says :

“ My anxiety that you should behave well, and make the very best use of your collegiate

opportunities, is very great. But I thank God, I feel much of the cheerfulness of hope. I know you have good abilities, quick apprehension; I trust you will not be indolent, and that a manly shame—to be ashamed to do wrong is a manly feeling—will prevent your adding yourself to the list of Carolina triflers, whose conduct has brought a college, such as Princeton, into disrepute. I hope you will feel a laudable pride in inheriting your father's literary reputation in a college where he received an education, of which he has made so excellent an use; yet an education much below what you may receive at the same institution, from the great improvements made in every branch of science since his time. I hope absence will not weaken your affection. Continue to love us; the more you love

your father and mother, the more you endeavor to oblige them, the wiser, the better, the happier you will be — and at some future period, when standing in the relation of a parent yourself, you will have the sensations unknown to all but parents — the consciousness of having been a good son, will fill you with inexpressible delight.”

It should be remembered that these were private confidential letters from an intelligent Christian mother to a son, for whom she felt only as a mother can feel, and to promote whose interests, she had labored and prayed every day of his life. Such maternal affection, manifested in such a way, can rarely if ever fail to produce its legitimate and proper fruits in those who are so fortunate as to be its objects. The youth to whom these letters were addressed, it is believed, never incurred

any college censure — was never charged with any immoral conduct — that his standing in his class was always reputable, and that he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts before he had attained his seventeenth year. The admonitions of his mother were not so much reproofs for what had taken place, as they were cautions against what might take place, and were designed as preventives rather than cures. The writer seemed fully aware that a college life was beset with many dangers, and surrounded with innumerable temptations ; that, in general, it was the most important, interesting, and perilous period in the life of a young man ; hence the pains which she took to throw, and keep around her son those moral restraints which were his only security against the dangers to which he was exposed. And there is a good reason

to believe that her efforts had the desired effect, by confirming her son in the steady pursuit of knowledge and virtue. And if a similar course were pursued by parents generally, there would be far less cause, on their part, for subsequent regrets growing out of the course which, in too many instances, their sons pursue while at college. To send sons or daughters away from under the eye of the parent, for the purpose of obtaining an education, is a positive evil to be tolerated only for the sake of a greater good, and of all the periods in the history of their lives it is then they most need the tender and affectionate admonitions of the parents. Separated from them, and surrounded by strangers, every expression of parental regard is to them a most welcome messenger, that calls up the recollections of all those fond endear-

ments connected with the scenes of childhood, and more deeply affecting the heart, it is more likely to produce its practical results for good.

Not only was Mrs. Ramsey constantly attentive to the intellectual and moral culture of her children, but their habits of industry, frugality, and economy were with her subjects of much care and attention. And this, too, whether they were at home or abroad. As an illustration of this, the reader will, perhaps, be pleased to see the following extract, taken from a letter written to one of her sons while at college :

“ You stated some time ago, that —— had four hundred dollars a year ; we know that from his mother, who said this covered every expense. You have received money in the same proportion, and rather more. You now

talk of spending one hundred dollars for clothes. Your wardrobe must be unnecessarily costly or miserably laid in, and you know that you have no pretensions to waste, from the idea that it will not be felt by your parents; you are well aware that it is with much exertion we provide what is comfortable, and have no money to throw away. What a weak mind you must have, and how much have I been deceived in its texture, if you suppose that foppish clothes and foolish expenses, or what you call a 'genteel appearance,' will make you respectable.

I feel more pride, more consciousness of being a lady, by having everything about my person, the persons of my children, and my household, in the plainest style of decency, than I possibly could by endeavoring to cover our moderate circumstances by a tinsel veil

of finery, which would deceive no one, and only show the shallowness of my understanding.

With prudence one hundred dollars will go a great way; without it ten times the sum will be like water put into a sieve. A gentleman lately returned, a graduate from Cambridge, informs me that he never spent three hundred dollars a year at college. A lad, son to perhaps the richest parents in Carolina, with only one brother to divide the inheritance, wrote to request his mother, that let him solicit ever so earnestly, his parents would never furnish him with more than *five hundred dollars*, for that sum would enable him to do many foolish and many generous things, and all beyond it would be shameful dissipation, to which he knew he was too much disposed, and therefore re-

quested temptation might not be administered to him. But why multiply examples? The real expense of boarding and tuition in colleges is a matter well known from printed statements; it is easy, therefore, to calculate what beyond it is necessary for the clothing, pocket money, and conveniences of a young man who does not go to college to be a fashionist, to sport various changes of apparel, to drink, to smoke, to game; but to lay in a sufficient stock of knowledge, and attain such literary honors as may be the foundation of future usefulness."

This, like the foregoing extracts, exhibit Mrs. Ramsey as a woman of a clear, strong, and practical mind, as well as a kind and an affectionate heart. Almost the entire labor of managing and educating her children she cheerfully took upon herself, leaving her

husband to devote himself to the duties of his profession, or follow his literary pursuits, which he did with remarkable diligence and uncommon perseverance. In order to this "she gave up every separate scheme, and identified her views and pursuits with his, and arranged all her domestic concerns so as most effectually to promote his comfort — anticipated his wishes and alleviated his cares, and in addition, assisted him, as far as was in her power, in his professional labors and studies."

In all the several relations which she sustained through life, her first object always was to ascertain what was her duty, and when ascertained, all her powers were devoted to its performance. The first question was, "Is it right?" not whether it were customary, fashionable, or even convenient — but is it right?

8

In the government of her children, Mrs. Ramsey was equally prompt, efficient, and consistent. She was well acquainted with the theories of Rosseau and his contemporaries in reference to the educating and governing of youth ; but her system of philosophy, as well as her ethics, on this subject, were derived from the Bible.

“ From this she learned that ‘ foolishness is bound in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.’ She, therefore, on proper occasions, used the rod, but always with discretion and judgment, sometimes with prayer, often with tears, but never with anger. She regarded confinement, and other similar modes of punishment, as more likely to cherish a sullen obstinacy of temper, without mending the heart, than a prudent use of the rod applied simultane-

ously with the offence. This she believed injured the temper less, and promoted the true ends of punishment more effectually than any other kind ; and it is believed that this is in accordance with the experience and observation of all who have attentively considered the subject. She constantly exerted herself to keep her children in a good humor, while ever it could be done by indulgences compatible with their interests—frequently partaking with them in their sports, manifesting a lively interest in their concerns, and laboring all the while for their benefit. From the text of scripture which forbids fathers to provoke their children to anger, lest they be discouraged, she drew several rules for her behavior towards her children. Though as a child she was implicit in her obedience to parental authority, yet as a

mother she was "very moderate in urging her parental rights, and avoided, so far as was consistent with a strict education, every thing which might provoke her children to wrath."

She considered herself as forbidden to use "unnecessary severity, sarcasms, and all taunting, harsh, or unkind language, overbearing conduct, high toned claims to superiority, capricious or whimsical exertions of authority, with several other particulars calculated to irritate children, or fill them with terror. On the other hand, she considered parents as required by this precept to curb their own tempers, to bridle their passions, to make proper allowances for the indiscretions and follies of youth, and to behave towards their offspring in the most conciliatory manner, so as to secure their

love and affections on the score of gratitude. These, and several other rules of conduct in the discharge of relative duties, were not taken up at random, but derived from reason and reflection, and especially from an attentive consideration of the preceptive parts of the word of God. Happy would it be for society, if all its members used their Bibles for similar purposes.

As she sought her Bible to learn her duties as a mother, from the same source she learned those of a wife. Though well acquainted with the reasonings of those who claim a perfect equality of the sexes, and though few, if any, could better support such claims than she, yet she yielded all pretensions on that score, in obedience to the positive declarations of holy writ, which she considered full in point, and which with her

weighed more than a thousand theories, or whole volumes of human reasoning.

The writer of this brief sketch is not unapprised that in giving his sanction, however unimportant it may be, to the doctrine and course of Mrs. Ramsey on this subject, he runs the risk of gaining the sneers of those who in modern times, so earnestly contend for the equality, if not indeed the superiority, of the female sex over the other. Be this as it may, he too has learned from the Bible. He too regards its teachings as transcending those of all other books on this, and all other subjects on which it treats. And while he most readily, and most cheerfully awards to the sex milder and softer natures, with a natural delicacy in the feelings of taste superior to man, and capabilities of as high intellectual and moral

culture ; yet, with the Bible before him, he must believe and contend that, in an important sense, their condition is subordinate and dependent. The various duties of the conjugal relation have been established by divine authority ; by divine authority are they enforced, and illustrated by those peculiar doctrines on which we hang our future hopes.

As Christ loved the church, so husbands are to love their wives ; and as the church is subject unto Christ, so wives are to be unto their own husbands in everything. To them they are to submit as unto the Lord.

This is the plain teaching of the word of God, and while this word is made the "man of our counsel," while it is devoutly acknowledged as the rule of our practice,

as well as faith, and its precepts obeyed, in the domestic as well as in every other circle of life — there must — there will be happiness.

## CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. RAMSEY was remarkably economical of her time — suffering none to be wasted, or triflingly employed. Like her father, who slept only about four hours in the twenty-four, she slept but little, rose early, and thus secured the best part of the day for religious exercises, and useful employments. Besides her regular devotional exercises, her time was divided between reading, writing, and working. In each, and every kind of female employment, she was remarkably expert, and dispatched a great deal in a little time. In the exercises just noticed she is said to have been equally expeditious,

and in each department performed as much as could reasonably be expected from one who exclusively employed in that alone. A great portion of her time was employed in writing letters to her friends — extracts from, and abridgements of books, original papers on various subjects, and copying for her father and husband. Her father pronounced her the best clerk he ever employed, and he had many. Besides many minor services in copying for her husband, she transcribed for him the whole of his History of the American Revolution, Life of Washington, Review of the Progress of Medicine in the eighteenth century, and the first part of his Universal History. In writing to her absent friends, she was grave or gay, as the subject required. In letters of consolation to persons in affliction, she greatly excelled.

Her reading, as has already been remarked, was not only varied and extensive, but was carried on with unusual attention, and great profit. From her comparative childhood she was regularly in the habit of making copious extracts from valuable books, and in after life, she made abridgements of some entire works for her own and her children's benefit. An example of this will be given here — for a two-fold purpose — first, to give a correct idea of her manner of doing these things, and secondly, to preserve for the use of private Christians, some valuable rules for keeping the heart — as the original work is now very difficult to be procured.

It is an abridgement of Flavel on Keeping the Heart, and is as follows :

“ ABRIDGEMENT. — To keep the heart is

carefully to preserve it from sin, which disorders it, and to maintain that spiritual frame which fits it for a life of communion with God ; and this keeping of the heart includes in it these six acts :

1st. Frequent examinations of the frame of the heart, turning in and examining how the case stands with it.

2d. Deep humiliation under a sense of soul disorders and heart evils.

3d. Earnest prayer to God for heart purifying and rectifying grace when sin hath defiled and disordered it.

4th. The imposing of strong engagements and bonds upon ourselves to walk more accurately with God, and avoid the occasions whereby the heart may be induced to sin.

5th. A constant holy jealousy over our hearts ; and,

6th. A realizing sense of God's presence with us, and a setting the Lord always before us.

To keep the heart is hard work, constant work, and the most important work — the honor of God, the sincerity of our profession, the beauty of our conversation, the comforts of our souls, the improvement of our graces, and our stability in the hour of temptation, are all wrapt up in, and dependent on, our care and sincerity in heart work.

MOTIVES FOR KEEPING THE HEART. —

1st. The studying and keeping the heart helps the understanding in the deepest mysteries of religion.

2d. It preserves against the infection of dangerous errors.

3d. It is one of the best evidences of sincerity.

4th. All ordinances would be fruitful, sweet and comfortable, if our hearts were better kept.

5th. Acquaintance with the heart furnishes a fountain of matter for prayer.

6th. By keeping the heart the decayed powers of religion will be recovered among professors.

7th. By diligently keeping the heart, we shall prevent and remove scandals and stumbling blocks out of the world.

8th. A heart well kept will fit us for any condition that God casts us into, or any service he hath to use us in.

9th. Diligently to keep the heart would exceedingly sweeten the communion of saints.

10th. By keeping the heart, the comforts of the spirit and precious influences of all ordinances would be fixed and much

longer preserved on the soul, than they now are.

Look over these ten special benefits, weigh them in a just balance. Are they small matters? Is it a small thing to have thy weak understanding assisted, thine endangered soul antidoted, thy sincerity cleared, thy communion with God sweetened? Is it a small thing to have the decayed power of godliness revived, all fatal scandals removed, the communion of saints restored to its primitive glory, and the influences of ordinances abiding in the souls of saints? If these be no common blessings, no small benefits, then surely it is a great duty to keep the heart with all diligence.

SPECIAL MEANS FOR KEEPING THE HEART.

—Means 1st. Would you thus keep your heart as hath been recommended?—then

furnish your hearts richly with the word of God, which is the best preservative against sin.

2d. Call your hearts frequently to an account, if ever you mean to keep them with God.

3d. Take heed of plunging into such a multiplicity of earthly business, as you cannot manage without neglecting your main business.

4th. Carefully observe the heart's first declensions from God, and stop them there.

5th. Take heed of losing the liveliness and sweetness of your communion with God, lest thereby your hearts be loosed off from God.

6th. Habituate thy heart to spiritual meditation, if thou wouldst have it freed from base, burdensome diversion.

Words of consolation to those who are

plying heart work, groaning and weeping in secret over the hardness, pride, earthliness, and vanity of their hearts—fearing and trembling over the experienced deceitfulness and falseness of them.

1st. This argues the heart to be upright and honest, whatever thy other gifts and abilities may be.

2d. God would never leave thee under so many heart troubles and burdens, if he intended not thy real benefit thereby.

3d. God will shortly put a blessed end to all these troubles, cares and watchings. The time is coming when the heart shall be as thou wouldst have it, when thou shalt be discharged of these cares and sorrows, and never cry out, Oh, my hard, my proud, my vain, my earthly heart, any more; when all darkness shall be banished from thy under-

standing, and then thou shalt clearly discern all truths in God — that crystal ocean of truth — when all vanity shall be purged out of thy thoughts, and they be everlastingly and delightfully entertained and exercised upon that supreme goodness and infinite excellency of God, from whom they shall never start any more like a broken bow. And as for thy pride, passion, earthliness, and all the other matters of thy complaint and trouble, it shall be said of them, as of the Egyptians to Israel, “stand still and see the salvation of God.” These corruptions thou seest to-day, henceforth thou shalt see them no more forever — when thou shalt lay down thy weapons of prayers, tears and groans, and put on the armor of light, not to fight, but to triumph in.

Lord, when shall this blessed day come ?

How long, how long, holy and true? My soul waiteth for thee — come, my beloved; come, O come quickly, and deliver me from this body of sin and death.

RULES TO KEEP THE HEART FROM DISTRACTION BY VAIN THOUGHTS IN TIMES OF DUTY.—Help 1st. Sequester yourselves from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. O, my soul, leave trifling — now be composed, watchful, and serious — this is no common work; it is God-work, soul-work, eternity-work. Pause a while upon thy sins, wants and troubles: keep thy thoughts a while in these before thou address thyself to God.

2d. Having composed thy heart by previous meditation, presently set a guard upon thy senses.

3d. Beg of God a mortified fancy — when thy fancy is more mortified, thy thoughts will be more orderly and fixed.

4th. If thou wouldst keep thy heart from these vain excursions, realize to thyself by faith the holy and awful presence of God in duties.

5th. Maintain a praying frame of heart in the intervals of duty.

6th. Endeavor to engage and raise thy affections to God in duty, if thou wouldst have thy distractions cured.

7th. Mourn over the matter to God, and call in assistance from heaven, when vain thoughts assault thy heart in duty.

8th. Look upon the success and sweetness of thy duties, as very much depending upon the keeping thy heart closely with God in them.

9th. Look upon it as a great discovery of the sincerity or hypocrisy of your hearts, according as you find them careful or careless in this matter.

10th. It will be of special use to keep thy heart with God in duties, to consider what influence all thy duties have on thine eternity."

Appended to this abridgement, was a most earnest, pathetic, and impressive prayer, in the handwriting of Mrs. Ramsey, which expressed a deep conviction of the original depravity of the heart, entire dependence upon the grace of God, with earnest desire to be freed from sin, that she might glorify God in her "body and spirit, which were his."

From the amount of labor which she performed, the reader will perhaps expect to be

informed that she, by affluence of circumstances, was free from a multitude of those cares which encumber many others, who are equally honest in their purposes to serve God. But this was far from being the case. During a great portion of her married, as well as her single life, she was in moderate and often straitened circumstances. Why this was so in the early part of her life has already been shown. In after life, she found that a great portion of her paternal estate consisted in unavailable Georgia lands. Though of excellent quality, these lands could not be sold in consequence of the then unsettled state of the political affairs of the country; and on that portion which had been sold the money could not be commanded, so that to the day of her death, the lands were either unsold or unpaid for. Two or three houses

in Charleston, which she had inherited from her uncle, James Laurens, had been burnt in the great fire of 1796, while the hurricane of 1804 injured and prevented the sale of a large portion of her husband's lands, and \$25,000 vested in the Santa Canal yielded her little or nothing. So that, with an abundance of means, she was, nevertheless, often much straitened in her circumstances. To illustrate this, the following extracts from her diary may be given :

“ Yesterday, I was full of thought and care. No provisions in the house ; sundry little domestic debts of absolute necessity to be paid. My dear friend and husband full of business in the way of his profession, but no money coming in. I was reading the Bible ; my mind wandered to the state of my finances, and I thought, with my house

full of dear children, what am I to do: I answered to myself—put your trust in God—try to make out by some exertion of your own, without perplexing your dear husband; and even if some sharp pinching should be before you, be satisfied to bear it; it will be for the good of your soul. What do you read your Bible for but to draw from it instruction and consolation, suited to all your circumstances. Presently my husband called me, and gave me a sum of money, more than sufficient for the immediate wants of the day, and the payment of those domestic debts, which lay heavy on my mind: saying at the same time, ‘this money has come from a most unexpected quarter: indeed, from a man who even said he would not pay, and now at this early hour of the morning, when I was not thinking of it, he

has brought the money.' And now let an infidel call this a lucky chance, if, when he had no money to provide for a large family, an unexpected supply should come into his hands; but let me fall down and worship before the Lord, and say: Oh thou that hearest and answerest prayer, unto thee, in every necessity of soul and body will I come. This is but one instance of manifold interventions of providence which I have experienced, and which, although not written down in books, are deeply engraven in my heart, and treasured up in my memory: and O Thou, who hast been pleased to provide necessary food for my family, vouchsafe also, to feed our souls with the bread of life."

At another time she says:

"I received a mercy—an answer of prayer almost next to miraculous—a sum

of money exactly suited to a particular engagement I had entered into, with more trust in the Lord than outward certainty about it. This sum of money coming to me so unexpectedly, with regard to the quarter from whence I received it, overcame me perhaps even more than some afflictive circumstances have done ; for I felt as if I had no strength remaining in me, and as if I should faint and die from the mingled emotions of surprise, gratitude, and awe. Oh let the Lord's name be praised, and let all that is within me, bless his holy name."

One other extract may be given, the date of which is two years later than the above :

"My dear husband, who is certainly a true believer and a great noter of Providence, having received two dollars from a casual patient, said to me, 'Here are two dollars,

which I have just got by chance.' I said, thank you ; but don't at this time, when we are in such want of money, say that any comes by chance. He smiled with his usual kindness, and said, I only meant that I had got it from a passing, and not a stated patient. About two hours after, he sent me up twenty dollars, just after I had been earnestly praying that the Lord, from the storehouses of his mercy, would send some supply to my necessities, and those of my family, which were very great ; and covering the twenty dollars, was the enclosed paper — 'Twenty dollars, not sent by chance, but by God. An unexpected volunteer payment of a doubtful old debt' — which I will keep, with this note on it, to remind me of the great goodness of God, and this his most seasonable answer to those prayers and supplications,

which I was making before him, with thanksgiving for past mercies, and humble trust in his goodness, through my dear Saviour's merits, for the relief of my temporal wants, or the supplies of his grace to keep me quiet and humble under losses and crosses."

But there is no need to multiply examples. These, taken from a great number, of similar character, will serve to show, first, That the great amount of reading, writing, and work which she performed, was often attended with serious difficulties, other and different from those immediately connected with these particular pursuits.

Secondly. That she devoutly acknowledged the hand of Providence in all her affairs—that she firmly believed God's providence extended over *all* his works, and that she was called upon to exercise gratitude and give

thanks for temporal as well as spiritual blessings.

Thirdly. That being taught to pray, "give us this day our daily bread," she felt it both a duty and a privilege to lay all her wants before the Lord, discharging her duty, and then leaving all things in his hands, with the comfortable assurance that he would not only do what was right in itself, but what was best for her true interests: and,

Fourthly. That hers was the faith that overcomes the world, that works by love, that takes fast hold upon God through the promises of the gospel, and cries, "I will not let thee go." With this faith she lived, toiled, suffered, and rejoiced.

The present writer would feel some hesitancy in thus exhibiting the private feelings of an individual before the world, without

consulting the surviving friends, were it not for the fact that the foregoing extracts have already been published, and published, too, by the bereaved husband of the original writer. Such publications are fully justified on the ground that, by showing what has been done, others may be induced and encouraged to imitate the examples thus set before them, and to seek to attain to similar happiness and like usefulness. Few publications have a readier, or a more lasting practical influence, than correctly written biographies. Their details find, to a greater or less extent, a response in every breast. We feel that they record the acts and exhibit the feelings of *one of us*—one subject to like passions with ourselves—subjected to like difficulties, trials, and afflictions. And so strong in the human breast is the principle

of imitation, that even a record of the acts of the wise and good greatly influence the conduct and assist in forming the character.

## CHAPTER V.

As a private Christian, the subject of this sketch was no less prompt and active in the discharge of her duties, than in those which grew out of the relation she sustained to others. Not only regular and prompt, to her set hours for meditation and prayer, but careful to maintain at all times the spirit of humble supplication, so that she may properly be said to have lived a life of prayer. Her husband declared that after twenty-four years of wedded life, with a distinct recollection of the scenes thereof—he never once saw her so far under the influence of resentment, or passion, as to “approach the confines of sinful anger, or even to be inconsistent with female decorum.” He declared

also, that during the same period he never knew her to utter anything that "could be called envious, slanderous, or bitter language ; or do any thing that appeared to be the result of malice or ill-will." Her uniform, consistent and scriptural piety marked out for her a course of conduct, greatly differing from that of the gay world around her, while at the same time it exposed her to the slightings, tauntings, and ridicule of the nominal professor, as well as the unregenerate fashionist. All these she resented in no other way, than by seeking, so far as was consistent with duty, to avoid their repetition, and earnestly praying for the authors. "If," says the author of the memoirs, "she excelled in any one virtue more than another, it was meekness." She had learned of him who was meek and

lowly, — who, though he was rich, for her sake became poor, that she through his poverty might become rich — who endured contradiction of sinners, and when he was reviled, reviled not again.

From early life she was a regular and devout attendant on the holy communion, in which she found so much comfort, that absence from it was regarded by her as a great loss. She was long in the habit of possessing herself of the names of persons, who from time to time were admitted to the same communion, and these she recorded as brothers and sisters in Christ, who broke bread with her, at the same table of their common Lord. And for these, whether personally acquainted with them or not, she earnestly prayed, remembering each individual, and took great delight in rendering

her fellow communicants every kind office in her power ; thus doing good —“ especially to them who are of the household of faith.”

Of the communion of saints she had high ideas, regarding them as being conjoined into the mystical body of Christ, and throughout the world all united under one common Head, and bound to each other by strong and peculiar ties.

On one occasion, after recording the names of some persons just admitted to communion, she subjoined the following :

“ Pity the nations O our God,  
Constrain the world to come ;  
Send thy victorious word abroad,  
And bring the strangers home.

We long to see thy churches full,  
That all the ransomed race,  
May, with one voice, and heart, and soul,  
Sing thy redeeming grace.”

After hearing the word of God preached, she was accustomed to write in a book, kept for that purpose, the text, together with an analysis of the sermon, to which she frequently added a short prayer for grace, to enable her to make a profitable use of what she had heard: thus showing that she was no inattentive or careless hearer of divine truths. The same course she taught to her children, and urged it upon them as one of the best means of retaining and profiting by what they had heard. When they were able to do this correctly, she desisted; and, under date of January 29th, 1797, gives the following reason for so doing:

“I no longer note the texts, &c., because my eldest daughter does, which I think a good means of fixing the scriptures in her memory.”

A specimen of the manner in which Mrs.

Ramsey noted the text she heard discussed, and of analyzing the sermons, may be to the reader both interesting and profitable.

“July 12th, 1795. Dr. Keith’s text, Psalms lxxv, 12. Thy vows are upon me, O God! I will render praises to thee.”

“Vows of dedication of property or persons, allowable under the gospel as well as under the law, having never been forbidden.

But this was not the point of view in which he meant to treat the subject; but that of religious acknowledgment of God to be our Lord, and dedication of ourselves to be his people, which is the duty of every one.

Particular seasons for making and renewing such vows.

Times of dedicating ourselves or our children by baptism, and of coming to the table of the Lord.

Times of special affliction. Example of Jacob, when he left his father's house to go into a strange land.

Times of especial mercy and deliverance. Example of David, when he penned the 116th Psalm.

Exhortation—to those who have already taken the vows of God upon them in the ordinance of the Lord's supper; to those who keep back from a dread of giving up the world, and being bound to walk more strictly. To those who keep back from fear of not performing their vows, and of falling off. The first are in an awful state; the latter have everything to encourage.

Exhortation to all; for all have, in some degree, the vows of the Lord upon them.

Who, but at some period of their lives, in some awful affliction, some threatened stroke

upon their property, their reputation, their dearest relations, have called upon God and promised to devote themselves to him if he would but help them? Who, but in some threatening danger by sea or by land, some severe fit of illness, some sore pressure of mind or body, have, at some period of their lives, in some way or other, taken the vows of the Lord upon them? Nay, every day's mercy calls for every day gratitude; and, above all, the gift of God's Son, and the offers of salvation, particularly bind us to it."

"A very excellent sermon," the writer adds, "and particularly suited to the state of my mind."

The above is a specimen taken from a number, some longer and some shorter, but all exhibiting an attentive and an understand-

ing hearer, with a retentive memory and an applying conscience.

One thing in regard to these notes the present writer deems worthy of special notice ; that is, in almost every case, she acknowledges the sermon as applicable, either in whole or in part, to her own case ; rarely, if ever, mentioning or alluding to others. Many times she devoutly returned and recorded thanks to God for sending to her, by his servant, words of consolation, reproof, or encouragement. She heard for herself, for her own instruction, edification, and improvement. Hence, she heard with attention, because of the interest which she had in the word preached ; with reverence and humility, because it was the word of God to dying sinners ; with prayer before hearing, at the time of hearing, and afterwards. Prayer,

that she might understand, receive, and apply the blessed truths delivered. She heard in sincerity, receiving it as the word of God, and willing to abide by it as it was, and not as inclination might prompt her to wish it. She heard with faith, believing that the word preached would not profit, unless "mixed with faith in them that heard it." And, finally, she heard with a determination to practice what she heard, so far as compatible with the written word of God. All this, and much more, is learned from the records which she left of her religious exercises.

And it will readily be conceded, that who ever hears the word of God with that profit which duty and interest alike demand—must hear in substantially the same manner. While that Christian, who hears a gospel sermon without finding in it more or less that

is particularly applicable to his own case, has good reason to suspect either the attentiveness of his mind or the sincerity of his heart.

As a private Christian, Mrs. Ramsey was remarkable for the closeness, earnestness, and frequency of her self examinations. By probing her heart, and closely analyzing her feelings, motives, and principles of action, she sought to know what relation she then sustained to God. To ascertain whether she were advancing or declining; whether her faith were stronger or weaker; her love and zeal more or less ardent; so that she might be ready to give to herself, as well as to others, a reason of the hope that was in her. Of this there is abundant evidence in that part of her diary which has fallen into the hands of the present writer. At one time, after close examination, meditation, and

prayer, she recorded the following resolutions :

“ To watch more against my easily besetting sin, and frequently in the day to ask myself what I am about in this respect.

To be more diligent in reading the word of God *with meditation*.

To have all my thoughts under better government ; saying frequently to them, ‘ Whence comest thou, and whither goest thou ? ’

To watch against indolence ; remembering that the Christian’s life is a warfare ; and the kingdom of heaven must be taken with holy violence, and cannot be obtained by the slothful.

To watch against extravagance and self-indulgence, and to endeavor to walk more usefully than I have hitherto done.”

Some years after this, when under mysterious providences, and in deep affliction, she closed a paper with the following :

“ Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right ? Oh yes, he will. Shall not He who freely gave his own Son for us, deal kindly by his redeemed ones ? Oh yes, he will. Be not therefore cast down, Oh my soul ; neither be thou disquieted within me, for I shall yet praise him who is the light of my countenance and my God ; yea, I will even now praise him, for whether he gives or takes, he is still my God — and seeing the whole, while I see only in part, will always do better for me than I could for myself.

Resolutions made at this time :

To watch against my easily besetting sin.

To read the word of God with more meditation. .

To lift my heart to God whenever I awake in the night.

To encourage religious conversation in the family on all fit occasions.

To be more watchful and earnest in inward and ejaculatory prayer.

To be much in prayer for my dear husband, and endeavor to be to him a useful as well as a loving wife.

To endeavor to see the hand of God in everything, and to undertake nothing without a dependence on, and a seeking of his blessing.

Not to let the spirit of indolence get the better of me in the education of my children: and in this matter may God most especially help me; for I find when any thing presses much upon my mind, I am very apt to be

listless, and inactive in the duty which I owe them."

What the besetting sin so deeply deplored in many parts of her diary really was, it is impossible now to tell. The author of the memoirs declared himself utterly at a loss on this point, but supposed it was most likely some want of earnestness or fervor in devotion, "coldness and languor in performing religious duties, and deficiencies in love to her Maker and Redeemer."

By "an easily besetting sin" is generally understood a sin, "to the commission of which there is a strong propensity, either from constitutional temperament of body, or some peculiar circumstances of the times — profession or outward estate." And, as has already been noticed, the writer of the memoirs declared that after twenty-four

years of wedded life, with a distinct recollection of the scenes thereof, he never once saw her under the influence of resentment so far as to approach the confines of anger — that he never knew her to utter any thing that could be regarded as envious, malicious, or slanderous ; and that if she excelled in one grace above another, it was that of meekness. The regularity, uniformity, and promptness with which she performed her religious duties, was well known to her intimate friends ; yet there was something which she styled her besetting sin — something known only to herself and her God, which she sincerely, deeply, and almost constantly deplored. It was with her as with all true Christians, the longer she lived — the further she advanced in the divine life — the more she knew of the human heart, the less she confided in it.

She knew that in itself it was deceitful and desperately wicked ; hence her trust, her only trust, was in the grace of God through the merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Her humility and meekness increased with her age. It is with holiness as with knowledge ; as he who knows most, is most sensible of the defects of his knowledge, so he who has attained the highest eminence in religion, is most deeply impressed with a sense of his own unworthiness. Hence the diary of Mrs. Ramsey is found to abound in expressions of fears of apostasy — in self-abasements and self-condemnations, which to some might appear extravagant. But it should be remembered, that these were seen by no mortal eyes except her own until after her death. They were not written for the public eye ; and before any one objects to

her manner, let him take the same pains she did to acquire self-knowledge, “by daily self-examination — by reading daily the word of God, and comparing herself with it — by studying such practical authors on the subject as Owen on indwelling sin, and Flavel on keeping the heart — by daily prayer to God to search and try her, to discover her to herself, by daily watching the origin of her thoughts, motives, words, and actions, and by comparing them all with the divine command to do all for the glory of God — and then he will be more capable of deciding whether the self-abasements and condemnation which run through her diary were the language of a weak, enthusiastic mind, or the genuine expressions of real, unaffected humility.”

It must not be supposed, however, that the subject of this sketch was always in

doubts and fears, or even in heaviness through manifold temptations. Far from it. The present writer has not been able to find, that in any instance she doubted her being a Christian, or doubted that the love of God was then in her heart; but her affliction was that she was not a *better* Christian — that her faith was not stronger — her zeal and love more fervent, and her usefulness more extensive. Yet in her sorest trials and deepest gloom, she ceased not to praise God. The remembrance of what he had done and was still doing for her, excited at all times the liveliest emotions of gratitude; and this gratitude was cherished and cultivated until it became one of the most prominent features in her religious character. The goodness and mercy of God were her constant themes; and in proportion as these were magnified in

her estimation, so were her self-abasement and her sense of unworthiness increased.

In the summer of 1811, Mrs. Ramsey was attacked by her last illness; and here the same patience, resignation, and fortitude, which had hitherto characterized her, shone forth with increased beauty and loveliness. From the first of the attack she entertained a presentiment that it would be her last, and proceeded to arrange her affairs with as much calmness and deliberation as though she were but preparing for a temporary journey. Her children and others she frequently exhorted, with great earnestness and pathos, beseeching them to take God for their portion, and meet her in a better world. With perfect calmness and self-possession she gave directions in reference to her funeral—directing that it should be private, her coffin plain, and

without a plate, and that a minister, whom she named, should perform his ministerial duties on the occasion in her own house, and before a few of her most particular friends.

A short time before her death, and while suffering most excruciating pains, she directed a collection of hymns which had been presented to her by the Countess of Huntingdon, to be brought, and the one read to her which commences :

“ When languor and disease invade  
This trembling house of clay,  
Tis sweet to look beyond the cage,  
And long to fly away.”

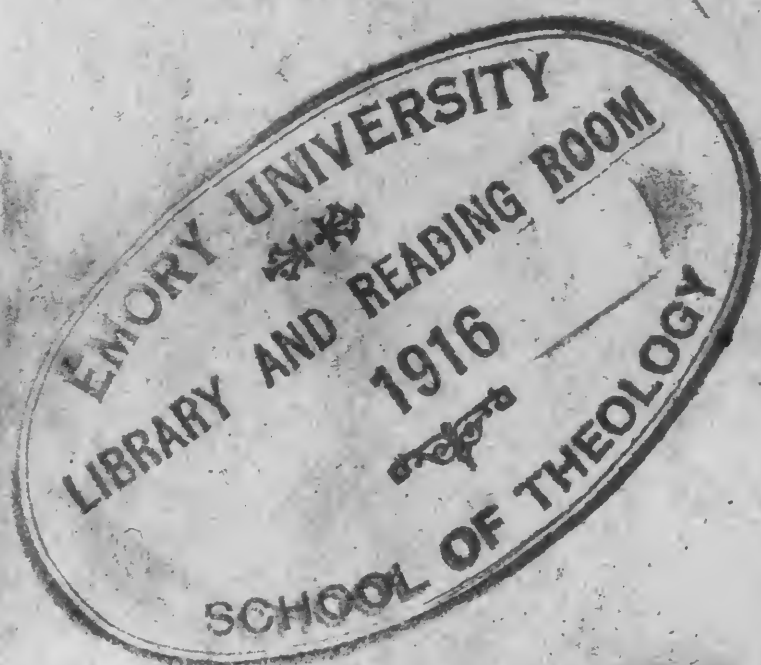
While this was being read, she repeated the third and fourth lines of each verse with her eyes turned towards heaven, indicating the coincidence of her feelings with the sentiments of the hymn.

About an hour before she breathed her last, she asked her husband and children, who were weeping around her, if they were willing to give her up. They evaded the question, when she calmly informed them that she had felt some reluctance to death on their account, but that God had made her perfectly willing now to give them all up, and soon after calmly fell asleep in the arms of Jesus.

Thus lived and thus died Martha Laurens Ramsey — the dutiful child — the confiding friend — the devoted wife — the affectionate mother — and the humble consistent Christian.



*Ms*



## DATE DUE

[illegible]

GAYLORD

		PRINTED IN U.S.A.
--	--	-------------------

DUPLICATE

EMORY UNIVERSITY

DUPLICATE



15181676

**LIBRARY**  
**CANDLER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY**  
**EMORY UNIVERSITY**

---

I. Library open for reading 9 A.  
M. to 10 P. M.

II. Library open for circulation 2  
P. M. to 10 P. M.

III. Books may be kept out for  
two weeks.

IV. A fine of two cents per day  
shall be paid for each book kept over-  
time.

2513

M'anally

Martha Laurene Ramsey

JUL. 28. 1989